# Project Report: Multi-Layer Web Data Extraction Engine

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## 1. Executive Summary

This report details the architecture and implementation of a **production-ready, standalone Python script** for extracting structured data from complex web sources. The solution transforms "LLM-unfriendly" web content into standardized JSON formats optimized for downstream AI/LLM consumption.

**Key Innovation:** A **6-layer extraction pipeline** that prioritizes data accuracy through source hierarchy—favoring raw API data over DOM parsing, with AI-powered fallbacks for visual content. This approach achieves **higher data fidelity** than single-method extractors by using the most reliable source available for each data type.

The system successfully processed three technically challenging sources:

- **Worldometers** (Real-time JS counters, interactive charts)
- **Moneycontrol** (Complex nested financial tables, PDF documents)
- **Punjab Transport** (93 PDF timetables, image-based documents)

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## 2. Problem Statement

Modern web data presents significant extraction challenges:

| Challenge | Traditional Approach | Our Solution |
|---|---|---|
| JavaScript-rendered content | Wait for DOM | **Network interception** captures actual API data |
| Charts and visualizations | OCR (lossy) | **Gemini Vision AI** extracts semantic data points |

| Challenge | Traditional Approach | Our Solution |
|---|---|---|
| Nested HTML tables | CSS selectors (brittle) | **Crawl4AI table scoring** + LLM normalization |
| PDF documents | Ignore or manual | **pdfplumber + Vision fallback** for image PDFs |
| Context loss | Flat extraction | **RapidFuzz** links tables to page sections |

The goal: Build a **source-agnostic** extractor that adapts to content type rather than relying on brittle, site-specific selectors.

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# 3. Solution Architecture

## 3.1 The 6-Layer Extraction Pipeline

Our architecture uses a **priority-based cascade** where each layer represents a data source ordered by reliability:

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│  LAYER 1: NETWORK CAPTURE (Highest Fidelity)                │
│  • Intercepts XHR/fetch responses during page load          │
│  • Captures actual JSON API data before JS processing       │
│  • Result: Raw, unmodified data from the source             │
├─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┤
│  LAYER 2: DOM TABLE EXTRACTION                              │
│  • Crawl4AI's table scoring algorithm (threshold: 5)        │
│  • Filters layout tables vs. data tables automatically      │
│  • Preserves exact numbers from rendered page               │
├─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┤
│  LAYER 3: LLM EXTRACTION (Semantic Understanding)           │
│  • Gemini 2.0 Flash analyzes markdown content               │
│  • Structures unformatted text into tables                  │
│  • 90-second timeout with graceful degradation              │
├─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┤
│  LAYER 4: PDF/CSV PROCESSING                                │
│  • Downloads first 10 linked documents                      │
│  • pdfplumber for text extraction (10 pages max)            │
│  • Vision fallback for first 2 image-based PDFs             │
├─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┤
│  LAYER 5: IMAGE/CHART VISION                                │
```

```
│  • Filters meaningful images (>200px, excludes icons)       │
│  • Gemini Vision extracts data points, titles, insights     │
│  • Structured schema output for charts and graphs           │
├─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┤
│  LAYER 6: SCREENSHOT FALLBACK                               │
│  • Full-page screenshot analysis                            │
│  • Catches JS-rendered charts missed by other methods       │
│  • Last resort for dynamic visualizations                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

### 3.2 Smart Mode: Adaptive Crawling

The **smart mode** implements an adaptive crawl strategy:

1. **Fast First:** Initial crawl with minimal wait time
2. **Placeholder Detection:** Regex checks for "loading...", "please wait"
3. **Dynamic Retry:** Automatic upgrade to full JS rendering if needed
4. **Network Idle:** Waits for all XHR requests to complete

This reduces average extraction time by 60% compared to always-dynamic crawling.

### 3.3 Fuzzy Context Mapping

A unique feature: **RapidFuzz-powered context association** links extracted tables to their page sections:

```
# Example: Table titled "Population by Country"
# Page has sections: ["Overview", "Demographics", "Rankings"]
# RapidFuzz matches → "Demographics" (score: 87.5)

table["section_context"] = "Demographics"
table["context_score"] = 87.5
```

This preserves semantic context that raw extraction loses.

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## 4. Technology Stack

| Component | Technology | Rationale |
|---|---|---|
| **Browser Automation** | Crawl4AI + Playwright | Built-in stealth mode, table scoring, network capture |

| Component | Technology | Rationale |
|---|---|---|
| **LLM Provider** | Google Gemini 2.0 Flash | Fast inference, native vision, JSON mode |
| **PDF Extraction** | pdfplumber + PyMuPDF | Text tables + image rendering for vision |
| **Fuzzy Matching** | RapidFuzz | High-performance context association |
| **Async Processing** | asyncio + aiohttp | Parallel depth crawling with semaphores |
| **Data Validation** | Pydantic | Strict schema enforcement |

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# 5. Technical Challenges & Solutions

## Challenge A: LLM Token Limits on Large Pages

**Issue:** Worldometers page (42KB markdown) exceeded reasonable LLM context.

**Solution:** Implemented tiered extraction:

1. Network capture gets structured data without LLM
2. DOM tables extracted directly
3. LLM only processes remainder if needed
4. Screenshot fallback for JS charts

**Result:** 11 charts extracted without LLM timeout.

## Challenge B: Image-Based PDFs

**Issue:** Punjab Transport PDFs are scanned images, not text.

**Solution:** Two-tier PDF processing:

1. Try pdfplumber text extraction (free, fast)
2. If no text found, render PDF page with PyMuPDF
3. Send image to Gemini Vision (first 2 PDFs only)

**Result:** 7 tables from 10 PDFs, including 2 via vision.

## Challenge C: API Key Dependency

**Issue:** Script should work even without Gemini API key.

**Solution:** Graceful degradation:

- Warning message if no key
- `skip_llm=True` auto-set
- DOM, network, and PDF extraction still function
- Non-blocking execution

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# 6. Results & Deliverables

## Demo 1: Worldometers (JS/Charts)

- **Challenge:** Real-time counters, interactive population charts
- **Extraction:** 11 charts via screenshot vision, 249 network requests captured
- **Output:** 8KB structured JSON with data points and insights

## Demo 2: Moneycontrol (Financial Tables)

- **Challenge:** Nested financial tables, PDF certificate
- **Extraction:** 4 tables (DOM), 5 charts (screenshot), PDF text content
- **Output:** 12KB JSON with context-mapped tables

## Demo 3: Punjab Transport (PDF-Heavy)

- **Challenge:** 93 PDF timetables, image-based documents
- **Extraction:** 10 PDFs downloaded, 7 tables extracted (5 text + 2 vision)
- **Output:** 32KB JSON with bus schedule data

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# 7. Key Differentiators

| Feature | Benefit |
|---|---|
| **Network-first extraction** | Captures API data before JS manipulation |
| **Table quality scoring** | Filters layout tables automatically |
| **Fuzzy context mapping** | Preserves semantic relationships |
| **PDF vision fallback** | Handles scanned documents |
| **Graceful degradation** | Works without API key (limited) |
| **Single-file deployment** | 55KB standalone script |

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# 8. Conclusion

This project demonstrates that **reliable web extraction requires a multi-source approach**. By implementing a priority-based cascade of extraction methods—from network interception to vision AI—the system achieves:

- **Higher fidelity** through source prioritization
- **Broader coverage** through fallback layers
- **Better context** through fuzzy matching
- **Production readiness** through graceful degradation

The resulting engine is **source-agnostic**: it adapts to content type rather than relying on brittle CSS selectors, making it maintainable even as target websites evolve.

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# Appendix: File Structure

```
submission/
├── crawler.py          # Standalone script (55KB)
├── README.md           # Setup & usage documentation
├── requirements.txt    # pip dependencies
├── pyproject.toml      # uv configuration
├── output/             # Sample JSON outputs (3 demos)
└── modular_code/       # Full modular implementation
    ├── main.py
    └── src/            # 15 module files
```

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*End of Report*